

Anti-Slavery Office,
New York, 28 Aug., 1862.

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Dear Garrison,

I wish I could have a good talk with you on some points connected the cause and our duties to it, especially as editors. It is difficult to have a satisfactory conference by writing, ~~but~~ it is of some importance, I think, that we should have a concurrence of judgment as to the course best to be pursued in respect to the class in our ranks (or perhaps I should say out instead of in), whom I may ^{indicate} ~~deserve~~ with sufficient accuracy by calling them gamblers and scampers, whichever you choose. The subject is brought to my attention now by the controversy

about ~~forget~~ to send back the copy of my letter to Howard.

between Mr. Howland and Mr. May in the Liberator. Howland sent me his first letter, shabbily withholding the information that he had also sent it to you, in the hope of that trick to get both papers into the controversy. As it was not possible for me to consult you, Mr. May, or any body else qualified to advise me, I wrote to Howland, acknowledging the receipt of his letter, and telling him, in reply to his urgent request for its publication that very week as important, that I could see no reason for haste, and should therefore take time to inquire what Mr. May had actually said and done, and then do as I might

think best for the cause. I knew
that Howland had had a quar-
rel with ~~Mr.~~ May, and I thought
that I saw evidence of too much
^{on his part} haste, in making an assault.
At the same time I sent Howland's
communication to Mr. May, asking
him what he had to say in
reply or explanation; my thought
being that I would print the
attack and ^{thus} the reply in the same
paper, and ^{thus} make an end of the
matter. Mr. May wrote that he
had seen Howland's article in
your hands, and that he had
told you not to hesitate, on his
account, to print it; and he sent
me, at the same time a copy of the
reply he had written for the

Liberator, leaving me to act on my own judgment in pointing or declining to print both the articles. The matter standing thus, I sent Howland a letter, of which I will enclose a copy in this (asking you to return it to me without fail, after reading it). This is what Howland calls "an unkind personal note" to himself, ^{He carefully encloses} ~~secretly~~, ~~covertly~~, the ground on which I had refused to publish ^{his} article, ~~and~~ hoping, doubtless, to compel me to take part in the controversy. He will be disappointed, however, for I shall not reply to his personal allusion in the Standard or anywhere else. It is better, I think, to bear his fling in silence than to occupy even a stickfull of room in explanations.

on a matter of so little importance.

I believe I have more confidence in your judgment, deliberately formed, on any question of editorial duty or expediency, than in my own; and perhaps you did what was best in pointing Howland's article. But if I could have seen you while you had the matter under consideration, I would have suggested the omission of the letter, and the publication of a paragraph in spirit like this:

"We have received from Mr. Joseph A. Howland a letter ~~criticizing~~ criticizing Rev. Samuel May, Jr., for remarks he is reported to have made in the war meeting recently held at Leicester. Mr.

May, in the exercise of his own conscientious judgment, encouraged enlistments in the army. Mr. Howland thinks he acted inconsistently and wrongly in so doing. Let each "be fully persuaded in his own mind." We do not see that we are called upon, while subjects of much higher importance are pressing upon our space, to surrender our columns for a controversy about it."

Would not that have been fair? It seems to me that it would, and I think it is a mistake to offer such easy facilities for personal controversy on any and

every topic that such men as Howland may choose to trust upon us. But, as I said before, you may have judged wisely in printing Howland's first letter & May's reply. I cannot think, however, that it was wise to let the controversy go a step further; or even if it was best to let Howland speak again, that it was fair to permit him to travel out of the original record and bring the Standard into the case. That portion of his letter, at least, ought to have been struck out as irrelevant to the issue before the readers of the Liberator.

I say this, not because I care

a fig for the allusion to myself, but
on the score of sound principle,
^{applicable} as ~~applies~~ to such cases. In
short, it seems to me, that in our
fear of assaults from such quarters,
and in our anxiety to preserve intact
the largest freedom of discussion, we
are in danger of overlooking the
limitations ~~of~~ imposed by com-
mon sense upon ~~any~~ and
running the thing into the ground.
It certainly is not to be admitted, for
a moment, that Howland, or any
body else, has the right, under any
and all circumstances, at his own
discretion, and without regard to
space and time, to arraign any
servant of the cause in our
papers and put him upon a
public defence ~~for~~ of his con-
sistency and integrity. And if his

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right in this particular is limited,
what are the limitations? and
when should they be insisted upon?

Portland, ^{last} Oct., I see, is
nurs for the Journal of Commerce
and other pro-slavery sheets. I con-
fess it annoys me to see one,
accounted an Abolitionist of
our school, thus giving aid
and comfort to the enemy.

The other day, in printing a
report of Aaron's Powell's first
of August speech, I drew my
pen across these words:

"It [the effort to maintain both
slavery and the Union] has made
Jefferson Davis really the President of
the whole country, with Lincoln as
a Northern Secretary—the as a neces-

ity while thus leaving slavery. Beauregard is undoubtedly a great general, but he has not served the Confederate cause with one-half as effectively as have McClellan and Halleck. Their eminent services fully entitle them to distinguished consideration and promotion at the hands of the Confederate government."

At the moment when Plumb was in durance, and I knew that the treason plotters were watching the Standard to find sentences that they could wrest from their context for the purpose of exciting and misleading the rabble, and making ~~up~~ up a plausible

case against us, in the hope of
getting our papers suppressed,
I thought it would be wise
to omit these somewhat ex-
travagant words. I relied on
Aaron's good sense to ap-
preciate my reasons for so
doing. But I fear, from the
tone of a letter just received
from him, that he is disposed
to make an issue, as if the
right of free speech had been
infraeted. Could anything be
more absurd?

For my part, I do not
mean to publish anything, restau-
ting, speech, or letter, that can fairly

be construed as designed to dis-
courage enlistments. It would,
it seems to me, be utter fool-
hardiness, for us, under pre-
sent circumstances, to run into
the trap set only for secession-
ists, but into which they are
adroitly attempting to lead us.
Have we not ample scope
and verge for discussion
and criticism without thus
giving aid and comfort to
our worst enemies? I think so.

This week there is a Con-
vention at Ellenville, Ulster Co.,
N. Y., at which Parker Pillsbury,
Mrs. Rose, Susan Anthony and
Aaron Powell are to be present.
I fear they will talk and act

very foolishly, making up a record for the Standard that, if printed, will give comfort to the pro-slavery party. What, in that case, shall I do? Am I bound to publish whatever they may choose to send, even if I think they openly disregard and defy the order of the War Department, and hazard the very existence of the paper? Or may I exercise a sound discretion in the ~~do~~ case and omit such portions of the proceedings as I may think fairly objectionable? I am not without apprehension

that P.P., who will doubtless
write the resolution, and
give tone to the whole affair,
may make an open issue
with me, knowing the ground
I have taken. I wish you and
I could be together when the
report comes, that I might
have the benefit of your
judgment.

Will you not write me
within a day or two, telling me
how far you agree with
me in what I have said,
and in what respects you
dissent? I really need your
counsel, though I hate to

tax you to write, or to consume
a moment of your precious
time. My position here is pe-
culiar. If the Standard were
my paper, as the Liberator is
yours, the case would be dif-
ferent. Others being in a sense
responsible for what I may
do, I am particularly anxious
to act wisely.

Yours, truly,
Oliver Johnson.

Will you not send me
your Williams town address? I
want to print it. O.P.

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